

The Adequacy of Christianity to Meet the World's Need.

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THE early Christians at least never stopped to debate the adequacy of Christianity to meet the world's need, but with profound and aggressive faith they sought to make known its saving power among nations. They believed in the spiritual dynamics of the gospel, a power that resided in the truth no less than an energy that asserted itself through the zeal of those who received it. The more formidable the difficulties, the graver the conditions, the more eager the desire to test the power of the gospel. It was the world's need that even attracted the apostles and missionaries, for they remembered the words of the Lord Jesus how he said: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." Therefore the more desperate the case the more anxious were they to apply

the remedy. The world's need was a perpetual

The Need a Challenge. challenge to the gospel with its power of an endless life. Great cities, then as now, the storm

centers of the unemployed and discontented, with their congested masses of the vicious and the diseased, had a peculiar attraction for the greatest of the apostles. Paul's Waterloos were Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth, the most populous cities of Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece, but he longed to preach the gospel to them that were at Rome also. To do that he was willing to undergo shipwrecks and to go bound in chains.

It was not the prosperous journey that he prayed for, as in the old version, but that if by any means he might be prospered by the will of God to come to Rome. It was because he was conscious of having some spiritual gift to impart that he unceasingly made mention in his prayers of those to whom he felt impelled to go that he might have some fruit among them even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

It was a mighty spirit that declared: "I am debtor both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." It was doubtless the Roman world that Paul had in mind in his writings and preaching when he declared that this gospel had been preached unto the Colossians "as also in all the world." That was the world of Paul's

time, embracing the best of the three continents of *Paul's* Europe, Asia, and Africa, with their diversities of tongue *View.* and nationalities, of religions and literatures and philosophies. The best that Persia or Greece or Egypt or Rome could offer or produce was all in that world with its crying needs and unassuaged sorrows and festering wounds. So confident was he that he had the sole remedy entirely adequate for the world's need that he proclaimed himself a debtor to all persons, of whatever speech or condition, in all that Roman world. Nor was he ignorant of the worst that sin has wrought; for neither Juvenal nor Tacitus pictures the uncleanness, the wretched-

ness, the malice, the self-complacency of wickedness as does the inspired apostle who has the sole remedy in the Christian religion.

For what has occasioned the world's need, with its ignorance, its vice, its pollution, its squalor, and wretchedness? "It was sin that brought death into the world and all our woe." The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. It is sin that has disturbed the world's activity and harmony, and the world's travail is in hope of deliverance from this body of death. The world's need comes through its ignorance and consequent helplessness. Because the whole head is sick the whole heart is faint. The world's need is born of its distrust

Cause of the of men, who are covenant breakers, without
World's Need. natural affection, unmerciful. The world's
need is the more appalling because of human
selfishness, with its grasping covetousness and
cruel ambition, which delight in dragging their helpless victims at their chariot wheels. The need of the world is for light, pardon, comfort, strength, hope, purity. That Babylonian sentiment is without patience and without pity which says: "Let the fittest survive; none other deserves to." As applied to men and women it is the motto of the savage as he starts on the warpath, murdering his aged parents who cannot keep up on the forced marches and who would be a burden. The pagan philosopher that welcomes famine and pestilence to lessen the world's overpopulation finds its counterpart in the unrelieved sadness of modern science which sees in all efforts to better the state of the weak and helpless only the increase of the aggregate of human suffering by augmenting the demand without adequate means of

supply. In both views the world is orphaned. It was this wider view of the race that made Voltaire say: "Strike out a few sages, and the crowd of human beings is nothing

Scientific but a horrible assemblage of unfortunate criminals,
Pessimism. and the globe contains nothing but corpses. . . .

I wish I had never been born." That was but the European world that he described a century and a half ago. At that very time Christendom had forgotten the great heathen world where scarce a missionary held aloft the torch of truth. Christianity at times needs to apologize for Christendom, but heathendom is the perpetual condemnation of heathenism. "The idea of man as a conscious, rational, moral individual, of worth for his own sake, of equal dignity before his Maker, did not exist in iniquity till it came into being through Israel." No wonder that Xerxes drove his soldiers into inclosures in order to number them like so many cattle. It is not until we see the individual that we can know the human heart and discover the world's needs in the need of an immortal soul.

There can be no remedy without a correct diagnosis of the world's need. It is superficial treatment that sees only symptoms. Philosophers and thinkers in all ages have had much to say of evil and of suffering; but appalled, they have passed by on either side without pouring in oil or wine into the gaping wounds of humanity. The spirit of fatalism regarded highway robbery as one of the necessary evils of the road on which the race was traveling. Buddhism, therefore, thought to escape from existence, with its attendant miseries, while Mohammedanism taught "Islam," or submission without hope, since man was nothing. A world is bankrupt in morals when bankrupt in faith.

The Sense of Sin. Christianity is the religion of redemption. Redemption from sin is the world's supreme need. But the confessed existence of sin is possible only where there is a holy God whose law has been violated.

Without the knowledge of God and of his law man has never had the knowledge of sin. It is unknown in the heathen world as the cause of its suffering and its woe. Centuries of wretchedness have not awakened the consciousness of sin. Nothing can do that but the sight of a holy God. The race is not simply unfortunate; it is sinful. It has not simply violated the laws of health, of agriculture, of commerce, of reciprocity, to which fact its misfortunes are due. It has broken the laws of a holy God, and its sins are the fruitful cause of its sufferings. It is sin which has dulled the intellect, stupefied the sensibilities, and weakened the will. The brutal selfishness of man is due not to the animal in him so much as to the devil in him. It is to the narrowing influence of sin that social relations have been so disordered, the caste spirit has been so powerful, and war and bloodshed have abounded. To deny sin is to deny the existence of any law or code of ethics, any source of divine authority. To deny sin is to prevent any exalted conception of worship, is to leave the

To Know the Remedy We Must Know the Disease. world's need undiagnosed and without an adequate remedy. Hence what a beggarly salvation is promised by any other religion than that which reveals the Son of God coming to seek and to save the lost. In every land Christianity has done more since its introduction than the native

religion in all the past. Whatever fails to recognize the moral needs of man is impotent to supply them. It is not sanitation

the world needs, but salvation; not "bread and games," but the Bread of Life. Art cannot gladden, as the Greeks learned, unless inspired by hope. It was only when Christ was made known that art found its true inspiration, its noblest theme, and a Michael Angelo was born, "who never moved his hand until he had steeped his inmost soul in prayer."

Christianity not only diagnoses accurately the world's need by pointing out sin as at once the great disturber and corrupter, but it alone of all religions reveals a righteous God who is alike the Author of the moral law and its exemplar. Morality and religion were so far divorced in the heathen world that the very example of the gods was pleaded in excuse for every sort of vice and crime. The philosophers who taught morals grew sick at heart at their little success because of the corrupting example of the gods, and wished for a javelin with which they might destroy these enemies of society like Jupiter and Venus. "There was not a gentleman on Olympus," not a false god fit to be invited into your home or to converse with your wife and daughters. The vileness of the Hindu gods is the great foe of family life in India now. The deity taught by Mohammedanism is not only a cruel despôt, but one who panders to lust in furnishing "the black-eyed houris" of the Moslem Paradise. In the gospel alone is revealed the righteousness of God, a God who is both the au-

***God the Source
of Conscience.***

thor and exemplar of the moral law, inspiring reverence by his own holy nature and imparting of his strength and nature, enabling men, giving them power, to become the sons of God. In his worship alone is found the spirit of true devotion, for he alone can awaken devotion whether in angels or men who

is the high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity. The "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty" which the angels sing ever becomes the devout song of men when the righteous God is revealed. Righteousness, if it exists in the world, is born of faith in a holy God. His nature is revealed to faith, and the righteous live by faith. Without a righteous God there can never be a righteous world.

Then again Christianity speaks with sufficient authority to quicken and invigorate the conscience. Christianity may almost be said to create a conscience as in the Dark Continent and other parts of the heathen world. While consciousness is the knowledge of ourselves, conscience is in the knowledge of God and ourselves. Unless there be belief in God, there is no sense of responsibility.

If there be no lawgiver, there is no law requiring obedience, and man becomes as irresponsible a being as the brute, to whom no revelation has ever come or can ever come, because he is incapable of receiving it. The conscience of the Roman was awakened by the civil law. His duties were those he owed the State. His religion was a lifeless ritualism, a punctilious repetition of liturgical formulas, burning incense before every oath of office, to validate every note or mortgage or last will and testament. It was reverence for the State, not for

Other Religions
Wanting in
Moral
Sanctions.

any idol. Among the Greeks raillery and jests were practiced in connection with the most solemn religious processions. The mysteries awoke no sense of obligation, quickened

no conscience. The Oriental worship was a sort of orgy in which ecstasy exaggerated almost to frenzy took

the place of devotion. Excesses of all sorts preceded or followed the so-called acts of worship where even the worship itself did not consist of vile and sensual practices such as were supposed to be indulged in by the gods themselves. In Paul's fearful indictment of the heathen world he says that they not only do such things, but take pleasure in them that do them.

But Christianity does more than reveal a righteous God, at once the Author and Exemplar of the moral law, and speak with sufficient authority through the certainty of its teachings to quicken and invigorate the conscience. It can do what no other religion can do; it can make alive. "Christianity is a new commandment with power to obey." Christ not only assumes the supreme place as the Ruler of human society, "the most dramatic movement in the experience of collective man," but attached to every precept is a promise of help. If the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Christianity not only reveals a righteous God, but declares that man, too, may be righteous. It is a revelation to faith that the righteous may live by faith. By its help the withered hand may be stretched out and the palsied limb begin to walk, the very dead can come forth from the grave, though bound hand and foot. Every doctrine of Christianity passes through the experience of Christian living and becomes real through its power to help.

Reviving Power of Christianity. God is a Father, Christ is a Saviour, the Holy Spirit is a Comforter, there is fellowship with God's people who have had like experiences of truth, and there is an indwelling power to help overcome evil. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Christianity is not a mere spirit, a spirit

unclothed, but it enters into the individual that he may be strengthened by God's Spirit in the inner man, it enters into the very institutions of mankind and molds or reforms them for its own purposes, and thus changes human society into the Church and the body of Christ. The Spirit of God does not enter the human soul as something foreign or extraneous to it. He enters it as the principle of its true life. The word "holy" is scarce applicable to a single person in the heathen world, but there is hardly a town in Christendom that has not had some holy person who showed what it meant to receive power to become a son of God. Faith sees a righteous God and becomes like him. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think according to this power that worketh in us. He causes the Spirit-filled man to declare: "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." It was such transforming power that made men kings and priests unto God, so that when any great enterprise was undertaken in the Roman Empire men knew that it was either the emperor or a Christian who did it.

Henry Drummond somewhere says: "Next to love for the chief of sinners the most touching thing about the religion of Christ is its amazing trust in the least of saints. Here is the mightiest enterprise ever launched upon this earth, mightier than creation, because it is re-creation, and the carry-

Drummond. ing it out is left, so to speak, to haphazard, to individual loyalty, to free enthusiasms, to uncoerced activities, to an uncompelled response to the pressure of God's Spirit." But in the presence and leadership of the Spirit, and in what he has made of redeemed man and can do with redeemed man, is found the glory of our religion. It is the Spirit that

buickeneth and leadeth. "He opened the portals of grace to the Gentile world, arranging every detail of the special service at which the Roman centurion was converted." It is this consciousness of his divine presence that enables a devout Church to say: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Christianity is not alone the religion of redemption for the individual, but it makes him the instrument of redemption to his fellow man. Other religions have regarded man from the standpoint of the State or as a member of a religious brotherhood, but it remained for Christianity to teach the great truth and fact of human brotherhood and to awaken an interest in universal man. Only a universal religion could do that, one having in it the very elements of universal power and conquest. "I believe in the communion of saints" is impossible in any pagan creed. Heathenism was without congregational life. Public spirit developed

itself simply on the political side. Christianity
Christianity taught men that their citizenship was in heaven,
a Universal and organized the brotherhood of humanity when
Religion. it taught the communion of saints and that the

Church existed for the edification of believers and the conversion of the world. Among Buddhists the holier the man the less he had to do with his fellow men. He was so saintly as to be absolutely worthless. His was the religion of selfishness, not helpfulness. Little did Rome know when she was persecuting the early Christians that she was destroying that which alone could save her. The weak side of the empire, the very cause of her ruin, was the moral deterioration of the lower classes. Her adoption of Christianity could have saved her by saving them and their rulers as well. The very social meetings

of Christians, such as the agapæ or love feasts, were forbidden through fear.

Christianity thus lays bare the world's true need as a need of redemption, and shows a righteous Father, against whom and all whose holy attributes man has sinned. But man's case is not hopeless, because God is a Father who is seeking his prodigal sons, trying to bring them to themselves that he may bring them back to him. Christianity is the religion of hope despite the hopeless condition of the race which has made all men despair of it save those who have seen the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Though sin has bestialized man and made him a wolf to his fellow man, the larger view of God which Christianity gives awakens better expectations of man. "No universal religion can hold to an im-

Its Revelation of God. perfect conception of God." Only a God of infinite perfections can have compassion enough and patience enough and love enough to save a

race of prodigals who have wasted both substance and life. Christ comes into the midst to undertake for us, and lays down his life to show the possibility of forgiveness with God and the power of an endless life in man. He becomes our elder brother to teach us the brotherhood of man, a doctrine that was a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to us the wisdom of God and the power of God. This regeneration of man, making mankind a new genus, or race, is possible because at bottom man is a spirit, and God's appeal to the deepest, most central part of man, his spirituality. But Christianity does not propose simply to save the spirit and cast away the body, but it teaches that the body is a temple of

the Holy Ghost which Christ has come to redeem. It is a complete salvation which redeems both body and soul. But it is more than all this: it is an enduring salvation, for it saves forever.

Christianity is thus the final religion, because none can ever arise to teach or do more. There can never be any doctrine higher than the Fatherhood of God, broader than the brother-

hood of man, deeper than sin and spirituality,

Its Finality. more complete than the destiny of both soul and body, and more enduring than eternity. Christianity is like the holy city, the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven: the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. It is the very tabernacle of God with men. Its perfections exhaust at once the power of thought and speech, as we behold the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

Not only is Christianity adequate to the world's need because of its lofty and exhaustive teachings and elevated morals; there is no religion comparable to it. The highest aim, whether of nature as seen by the agnostic, or of Christianity expressing the mind and heart of God, is not the creation or production of any other creation or production of any other creature, but the perfection of man, the masterpiece of creation. Man, too, is the final product of religion. The professed aim of Buddhism is the extinguishment of personality; that of Christianity is the fullness of personality. The controlling thought of Buddhism is that the only good Chinaman is a dead Chinaman; the claim of Christianity is that the best man is not the one who has the least but the most manhood, whose personality is not diminished, but completed and that the truly good man, whether Chinaman or

American, is the regenerated one. Islam is an ethical and social system that is a menace to the world. The despotisms where it prevails are not accidents, but the legitimate results of the Koran; and so long as the Koran exists as the authoritative book nothing better can come in their stead, when the very god of the Koran is a willful despot and men are simply his slaves. If England has a submerged tenth, what shall we say of Turkey and Persia, with their submerged nine-tenths? Christ alone is the "Light of Asia." Only under the influence of the Christ who brought immortality and life to light by the gospel do the human faculties find their largest scope and play. Because man is an immortal being he is worthy of sympathy and help, and a new order of society is possible, the result of spiritual forces set in motion through Christ.

Christianity is Christ, and there is but one Christ. There have been many prophets, but only one Christ. There have been many leaders, but only one Christ. There have been many kings and priests, but only one Christ. There can be no second Bethlehem, no second Calvary, no second Olivet, no second Christ. And Christ is King, because he is Saviour. He governs men because he has redeemed men. Men live for him and in him because he died for them. It is what Christ teaches, what Christ suffers, what Christ does, what Christ is, that makes Christianity. When any other religion can produce a Christ, a Saviour of his people, then alone can it do anything adequate for the world's need.

What Christianity can do for the world's need may best be known by what it once did for the world in which Paul preached

it, the proud Roman world coextensive with the power, the culture, the religions of the great nations of the three then known continents which acknowledged the supremacy of the Roman Empire, while the Mediterranean which washed the shores of

these continents was itself a Roman lake. Here was *What It* the Pantheon against Christ, all the gods of the ancient world with the Roman emperor at their head *Has Done.* deified as "lord and god" to represent the supremacy of the State against one whom a Roman governor designated as "Jesus, that is called Christ."

That the religion of Christ, which was not even the religion of his own people, a people subject to a Roman yoke, should overthrow every religion represented in the Pantheon until the gods and temples which seemed inseparable from the literature and life of the people should be left without a single worshiper, and only broken images and altars be left to satisfy the curiosity of the student of the classics seemed utterly incredible. As Prof. Freeman says: "That Christianity should become the religion of the Roman Empire is the miracle of history, but that it did so become is the leading fact of history from that day onward." The converts of Christianity were among the educated rather than the uneducated, in the cities rather than in the villages, which were last to yield to new ideas and the new faith. Paul's

"The Miracle of History." great epistles, with their deep thoughts, their closely knit reasoning, and their views of truth reaching out into the eternities before and after, were on the face of them not intended for illiterates or weaklings. It was then that Christianity showed its power to stimulate, to inspire, and to lead the world's progress because of

what it did to meet the world's need. Never was the moral disability of the world greater than when Christianity began its triumphant career in the Roman Empire, and that without temples, altars, images, and opposed less by the priests or decaying religions, too far gone to offer violence, than by the strong arm of the State and the proud philosophy of the schools. What was the secret of its triumph?

Next to its divine Lord and Founder, and because of him, its success was due to what the new religion did in satisfying the world's need. Christ, who fitted for paradise the dying thief whose faith and love so quickly followed his penitential tears, was, before the close of the first century, recognized even in Cæsar's household as greater than Cæsar, and some two centu-

ries later was worshiped from the throne of the Roman Empire. It was Christianity that stopped human sacrifices; ended the gladiatorial shows and licentious sports of the amphitheater; drove

from the continent of Europe the unnatural vices which Paul described in his Epistle to the Romans, and which still abound in the Turkish Empire and in India; put an end to the exposure of infants to death by wild beasts or starvation; checked the spirit of private revenge and of cruel and ceaseless warfare by proclaiming the "Truce of God" from Thursday to Monday of each week as covering the time of the passion and resurrection of our Lord; abolished slavery, which was coextensive with Europe; taught purity; established charities of all kinds; transformed the morals of Europe and of the Roman Empire by sanctifying childhood, honoring womanhood, and reverencing old age. All this was done, too, despite the relentless persecutions

The Need Net.

in Asia Minor, Africa, and Gaul, which not only saturated the soil with blood and cast the ashes of martyrs into the rivers, while the mocking crowds looked on to see what had become of the boasted doctrine of the resurrection, but furnished such countless victims for the Roman amphitheater that the very wild beasts tired of attacking them as if they themselves had become men when the Romans had become beasts. But the real triumph of Christianity was not when the Emperor Constantine was baptized, or even when the Roman Senate formally adopted Christianity as the true and only religion of the empire; it was when the emperor Galerius, who was the real author of the most cruel of all the persecutions under his predecessor, Diocletian, finally put an end to the burning of temples and sacred books and the

Final Triumph in Rome.

slaughter of Christians by his historic edict of toleration issued in 311, which declared that the purpose of the persecutions had failed, and not only gave permission to Christians to hold their religious assemblies, but added this instruction, "that after this manifestation of grace they should pray their God for the welfare of the emperor, of the State, and of themselves, that the State might prosper in every respect, and that they might live quietly in their homes." This was when the Galilean indeed conquered, and Paul, who had fallen a martyr before one Roman emperor, saw another one stand up for prayers. Then it was from the third heavens that Paul saw things on earth that were lawful to utter, and they are lawful still. The hope of the whole race as that of the proudest people of antiquity, a people having crucified the Prince of Life, sought to destroy all his followers, reveling in power that was rapidly passing away before a kingdom that should endure forever, is the hope alike of the individual and of the nation that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

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